



**Manchester
Metropolitan
University**

Marshall, Kristin (2019) META-MORPH-OSIS: Shifting Perspectives On Death, Stillness And The Moving Image or How I Dreamt Of Mrs Risley. UNSPECIFIED. (Unpublished)

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CONTENTS



1

Introduction

03

2

Creation through Destruction.

04 - 19

3

Illumination Archives, Tracing Visibility, Light & Memory.

20 - 25

4

Epiphanies

26 - 28

5

Failure has Become Key

29 - 31

6

Conclusion

32 - 33

7

Appendix
Adopt A Slide Text
34 - 35

8

Images
Collection - small set of slides taken from Archive Material
featured in META-MORPH-OSIS
36 - 37

9

References
38 - 47

10

List of Illustrations
48 - 49

META-MORPH-OSIS



Shifting Perspectives On Death, Stillness And The Moving Image or How I Dreamt Of Mrs Risley

META: meaning self-referential [meta data – data about data]

MORPH: from the Greek meaning a transformation, a change from one state
into another

OSIS: a condition, process, action [in medicine: of decay]

It was half past six and the hands were quietly moving forwards.

Franz Kafka, The Metamorphosis

I suppose it is out of laziness that the world is the same day after day. Today it
seemed to want to change. And then anything, anything could happen.

Jean-Paul Sartre, Nausea



FIG [1]

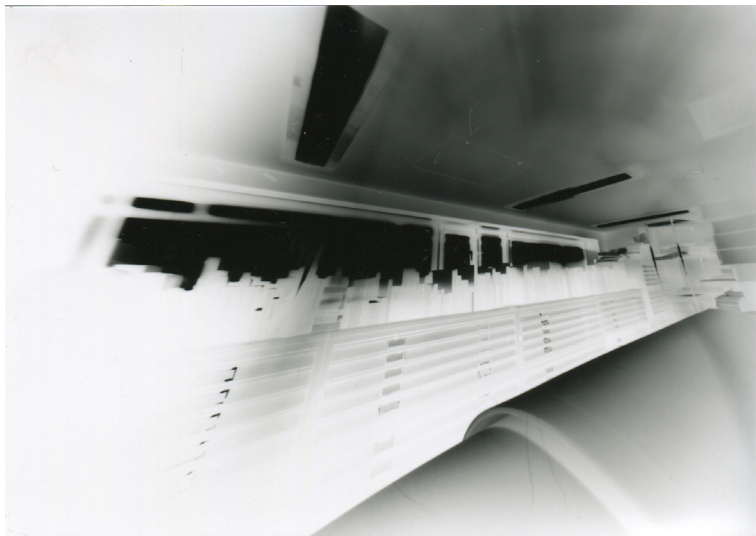


FIG [2]

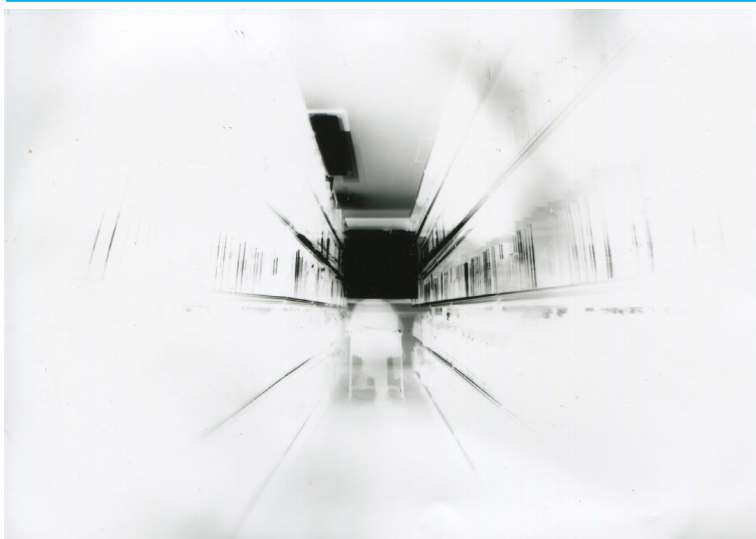


FIG [3]

After many weeks of research, it feels fitting that I write this section of Monograph within the comforting folds of the Special Collections, writing whilst exposing paper to light. I record a sequence that might be interpreted as a vanishing, a record of the disappearance of Mrs Risley into the endless fabric of time. “Existence is without memory; of the vanished it retains nothing - not even a memory.” (Sartre, 2000) It could also then, if this is in fact the case, be seen as an appearance or a discovery of her becoming visible, in the page turns of light sensitive paper.

The subject I use to enact the visibility is myself. I place myself within the experience as both a memorial to Risley and as a wider representative of the visibility of my gender in the world and perhaps in the more specific field of art practice. This act can be seen as a document of visibility, of finding oneself again enacted through and because of an engagement and discovery of a place; the archive.

The paper sequence will experience the process of chemicals on its surface. Each pairing will undergo the development process together. Twenty-four pairs of visible transformations will occur, as the image slowly reveals itself in the tray, an image of me, appearing as phantasm¹. But here, ‘a return to the index and to the real of the photographic medium is not a return to realism’s aspiration to certainty. Rather, the trace of the past in the present is a document, or a fact, that is preserved in but also bears witness to the elusive nature of reality and its representation. It is here that the reality of the photograph as index becomes intertwined with the problem of time’ (Mulvey 2006) and becomes a requiem to Mrs Risley.

1. (n.) early 13c., *fantesme*, from Old French *fantosme* “a dream, illusion, fantasy; apparition, ghost, phantom” (12c.), and directly from Latin *phantasma* “an apparition, spectre,” from Greek *phantasma* “image, phantom, apparition; mere image, unreality,” from *phantazein* “to make visible, display,” from stem of *phainein* “to bring to light, make appear; come to light, be seen, appear; explain, expound, inform against; appear to be so,” from PIE root **bha-* (1) “to shine” (cognates: Sanskrit *bhati* “shines, glitters,” Old Irish *ban* “white, light, ray of light”).

THE ACT OF TOUCH
IS EVERYTHING

nothing dark

camera lucida



FIG [4]

[illegible]

(Barnes, 2012)

Further, a copy accompanies the master, allowing me to placate the damage that I willfully inflict in the knowledge that the Master remains intact as an original copy of this archival material. This seems only fitting running concurrently as it does with the VRC² Campaign, that actively promotes the belief that the entire archive of 300,000 slides should remain in its entirety for future researchers and to inspire future art students. To have deliberately damaged a unique 16mm film (there would be no way of knowing otherwise) would not, in my opinion, be ethically acceptable. Dated by the clothes of the subjects and later by John Davis (Visual Resources Curator) from the film stock.

it is accurate to say the original master was shot in the 1940's. The copy is of later stock, 'Kodachrome A', which dates to the early '60's, indicating it was duplicated at a later date. For what purpose might a copy be made some twenty years after the original event? I imagine, to keep safe the Master due to its preciousness. I attribute the preciousness not to the butterfly footage, but to that of the subjects: mother and daughter. It is their relationship that is central here. Did she look back from adulthood to herself as a child, cherishing a shared memory or is this an act of remembrance, if perhaps now one is lost? Christian Boltanski uses found ephemera in this way to tap into shared experience. He explains,

"[An artist] works with his own memory but at the same time his own memory must be a universal memory and everyone must say, but it's incredible he knows this story, it's my story. [...] It works like a stimulus, I show a photo of a child on a beach, but for each one who looks at the photo it's another beach, another child. [...] If you are an artist you must not have a face, you have a mirror in front of your face and everyone who is looking at you says, "oh, it is me" and you become the other, but you become each of the other'.

(B o l t a n s k i , 2 0 1 1)

There are no conclusive answers, one can only imagine and here again archival materials inspire possibilities of narrative. It would seem this is an inherent quality to such materials varying though they are in form, we instinctively attribute story when trying to 'understand' the materials we are presented with.



Fig [5]
Christian Boltanski
Face, 1996
Photographs, Photograph on transparent paper with 3 stitched photographs

“ The moth, like the butterfly, can be
a symbol of the psyche³ . But, unlike
the butterfly, it does not usually carry the sense
of the psyche’s rebirth. The moth’s real (and
proverbial) attraction to the consuming flame
is its more commonly considered a symbolic
characteristic.

”
(Caspari, 2003)

|||||

3. Aristotle gave the butterfly the name ‘psyche’ , the Greek word for soul.

‘Because of its remarkable capacity for changing form, the caterpillar symbolically can represent transformation, development, and growth in the human being, or, in Jung’s terms, the process of individuation. In this psychic journey old ways attitudes, patterns of thought, and behavior lose energy and value (in effect, dying) and a new sense of inner life and psychic reality comes forth, symbolized by the butterfly/ about the emerge.’
(Caspari, 2003)

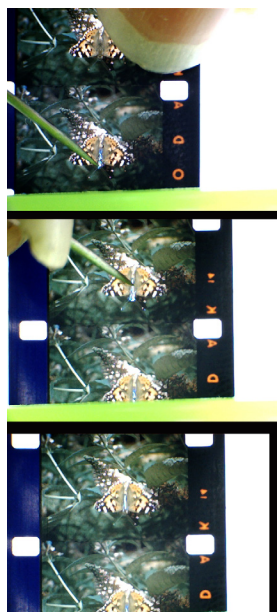


FIG [6]

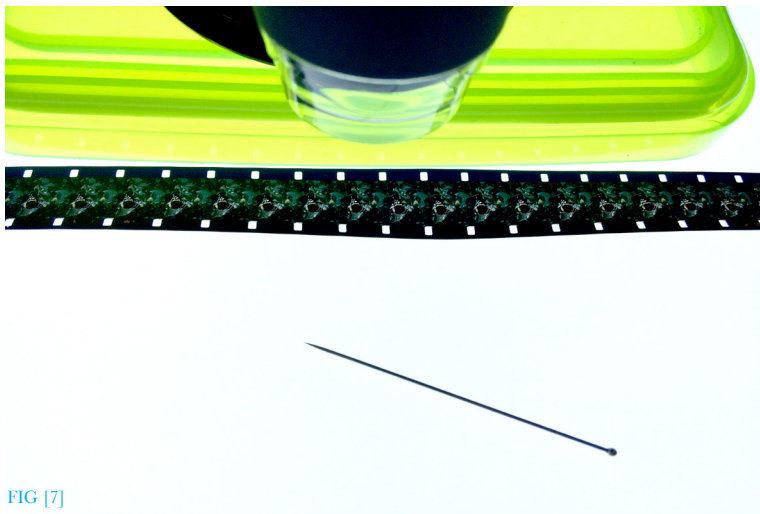


FIG [7]

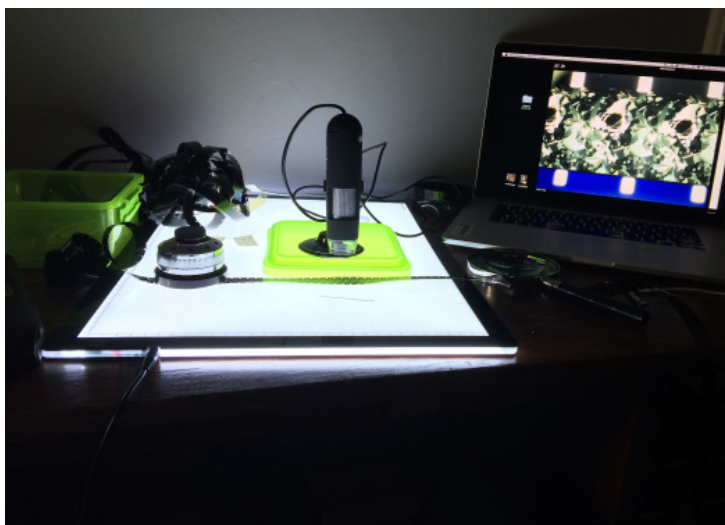


FIG [8]

Time and time again this can be witnessed within the (to date) eight-one contributions to our Adopt a Slide Project, where so many appear compelled to share deeply personal responses inspired by the slide collections. My interest in the damaged slides ‘unstuck, disintegrating and yet poignantly beautiful’ (Marshall, 2015) is also paralleled in the physical act of irreparably ‘damaging’ the film; an act of destruction to make a new creation, one that is not expected to last the duration of the show. The ephemerality of this points squarely to the transience of archival materials and the fragility recognised within them.

The physical touch, central to the personal and emotional connections made to archival materials, is further reintroduced through the act of scraping. The tool used for this act is one of the butterfly pins used to create the sketchbook pin board in ‘The Place where Records Are Kept exhibition’⁴, the origins of the work. The three cut up segments of sketchbook removed from the pin read ‘nothing dark’, ‘camera lucida’ and ‘THE ACT OF TOUCH IS EVERYTHING’. They are resident on the light box throughout the action. Each contains a single pinhole where each was pierced and mounted, offering another rendition of a pinpoint of light, the epiphanies discussed in previous writing. The action similar to that of the pinhole cameras in France is one of meditation⁵ scraping away the bodies as an act of remembrance, death twenty-four frames a second. In her book ‘Death 24 x a second; Stillness in the Moving Image’, Laura Mulvey states,

‘In Jean Luc Godard’s film of 1960, ‘Le Petit Soldat’, the answer to the question ‘what is cinema?’ is ‘truth twenty four times a second’. But these frames as individual photographs are also a testament to cinema’s uncanny. So the answer to the question ‘what is cinema?’ should also be ‘death twenty four times a second’. The photograph’s freezing of reality, truth in Goddard’s definition, makes a transition from the animate to the inanimate, from life to death. The camera reverses the process, by means of an illusion that animates the inanimate frames of its origin.’

(Mulvey, 2006)

⁴ Which took place at the end of the Image and Archive Options Unit.

⁵ The repetitive nature of the practice allows further reflection on the work. I pause intermittently to write, capturing thoughts as they surface. This has become a powerful part of the practice.

CHAOS (GREEK
ΧΑΟΣ, KHAOS)
REFERS TO THE
FORMLESS OR VOID
STATE PRECEDING
THE CREATION OF
THE UNIVERSE OR
COSMOS IN THE
GREEK CREATION
MYTHS, OR TO
THE INITIAL
“GAP” CREATED
BY THE ORIGINAL
SEPARATION OF
HEAVEN AND
EARTH.

.....

There is stillness here, a permanence, a meditation, natural magic of the registration of light on film and paper. Since cinema is the illusion of movement as a series of stills, here chemical fixing forms a delay creating a static pause, a moment⁶ (Mulvey, 2006). A stillness intended for reanimation, to breathe life back in and yet still result in inevitable decay and decrepitude until, as Mary O'Neil quoting Shepley says,

"The demise of the work becomes the goal and, in letting go of the ego and notions of success, the damaged goods and the discarded become valuable." She continues "he [Shepley] describes how the film will play and play until the CD or the computer gives up and then it is over, not finished, just over."⁷ (O'Neil, 2011)

7. In her article O'Neil looks at two works: Domain of Formlessness (2006) by Alec Shepley and Time and Mrs Tiber (1977) by Liz Magor. "Both works embody the process of decay and tell a story of existence overshadowed by the knowledge of certain death and the telling of the story as a means of confronting that knowledge. The ephemeral art object tells a story in circumstances when there are no words, when we have nothing left to say." (2011))

This is uncertain. The outcome is unknown. I can only create the best conditions for its survival in the hope that it might 'survive'. Decrepitude is inevitable and if the film withholds the pressures placed upon it, decay will become evident. As time passes, so the film will scratch, age and disintegrate. Such is the fragility of this medium. Life will be played out through the repetitive action of scratching, this time by the mechanical action of the machine. Light too will emit through the bodies and 'chaos' in the true Greek form⁹ will ensue.

6. This cinema (like photography) has a privileged relation to time, preserving the moment at which the image is registered, inscribing an unprecedented reality into its representation of the past. This, as it were, storage function may be compared to the memory left on the unconscious by an incident lost to consciousness. Both have the attributes of the indexical sign, the mark of trauma or the mark of light, and both need to be deciphered retrospectively across delayed time.' (Mulvey, 2006)

I am uncertain as to the length of time the 16mm footage will survive. Threaded onto a looper⁸ the film will endure a tension it may, due to its age and unknown preservation state, not be able to withstand. When added to the violence inflicted upon it by the 16mm projector, risk is ever present, so making 'destruction [...] inherent to production'. (Anders, 1956) The film may run... May even last the duration of the show or might tear, rip or be shredded in the process of revealing its contents to onlookers.

8. A devise attached to the handle position on a 16mm film projector that allows a length of film to be threaded through the projector, onto the devise and spliced together as a loop, in order to allow the film to play endlessly.

9. Chaos (Greek χάος, khaos) refers to the formless or void state preceding the creation of the universe or cosmos in the Greek creation myths, or to the initial "gap" created by the original separation of heaven and earth. Greek χάος means "emptiness, vast void, chasm, abyss", from the verb χαίνω, "gape, be wide open, etc.", from Proto-Indo-European *ǵʰeh₂n, cognate to Old English geanian, "to gape", whence English yawn. It may also mean space, the expanse of air, and the nether abyss, infinite darkness. Primal Chaos was sometimes said to be the true foundation of reality, particularly by philosophers such as Heraclitus. [...] An alchemical treatise by Heinrich Khunrath, printed in Frankfurt in 1708, was entitled Chaos. [...] The treatise purports to quote Paracelsus on the point that "The light of the soul, by the will of the Triune God, made all earthly things appear from the primal Chaos." (Szulakowska, 2000)

“ OUTSIDE OF THE DIGITAL REALM, SOME OF THE MOST STRIKING CREATIVE OBJECTS ARE SUBTLY DESIGNED AND EXECUTED RUPTURES, WHICH DESTABILIZE THE AUTHORITY OF A SINGLE VANISHING POINT AND TEASE OUT VARIATIONS OF PRESENCE IN THE INDEFINITE SPACE OF SO- CALLED ABSENCE ACROSS MEDIA PLATFORMS. THE TERM ‘RUPTURE’ HERE IS A DELIBERATE CHOICE BECAUSE IT SUGGESTS DANGER AND EVOKES VIOLENCE, APPROPRIATELY DESCRIBING THE PROCESS OF CREATION THROUGH DESTRUCTIVE MEANS.

Robert Rauschenberg's 'Erased De Kooning drawing' similarly conflicts the presence and absence of drawn forms, framing traces of the passed through the lens absence and obscuring where one work and artist begins and the other ends. These acts create ruptures in both the creative process (anchored in destruction) and the viewer's perception of what is perceptible and therefore trusted, forging new realities and multiple points of reference. As such, there is a compelling relationship between mediated experience and perception, both of which are unfixed... This outlook questions the totality of absence driving one to acknowledge its residue and subsequently its tethered relationship to presence. It also recognises the ability to feign absence through partial erasure or by obstructing perception.

(Chuk, 2015, p6)



FIG [9]

Mulvey (2005) argues that new technologies have given rise to a fetishist attitude to Film and that through the ability to pause, fast forward and rewind we can and have developed an interest in the frame and that this has transformed spectatorship and our understanding and experience of how we digest narrative. Barthes outlined that photography had transformed the Victorian landscape completely changing their perspective on this now frozen vision. (Zemke, 2012)

Here then we see a narrative broken up, decentralised, non linear, one bleeding into another, referencing and juxtaposing¹⁰ , alluding to the larger narrative surrounding the experiences connected to and inspired by the Butterfly Book, whilst paralleling the

¹⁰. The image is a pure creation of the mind. It cannot be born from a comparison but from a juxtaposition of two more or less distant realities. The more the relationship between the two juxtaposed realities is distant and true, the stronger the image will be - the greater its emotional power and poetic reality...' [Pierre Reverdy, Nord-Sud, March 1918] (Breton, 1969)



FIG | 10 |

An under current exists to that which is outside of the frame¹¹ or as Pascoe (1997) would have it, '[t] he outer edges of the screen are not, [...] the frame of the film image. They are the edges of a piece of masking that shows only a portion of reality.'¹² The Real is the hidden/ traumatic underside of our existence or sense of reality, whose disturbing effects are felt in strange and unexpected places. [Lacan, 1988] The aesthetic and ideology of the 'cutup' is also utilized drawing from previous ideas surrounding this when working with slide imagery during the Image and Archive unit.¹³

The Greek word for 'insect' is 'entomon' literally meaning, 'to cut up or divide into segments', and is the source of the word 'entomology'. The Greeks had used the term for insects because of the clear division of insect bodies into three segments, now called the head, thorax, and abdomen. In pre-digital filmmaking the edit process literally cut the film rushes, in order to splice two sections back together and run them through the film projector to form a linear edit. The "Montage" edit juxtaposes two strikingly different images so the viewer might make connections between them to form new meaning. By the use of "cut up" we find a new whole.



FIG [11]

11. I have recognised this many times though out this exploration, not least in my fascination with the slide as material object, the mounts representing the space, spilling out where data exists. This has contributed to my relentless attempts to prevent the disposal of these original and irreplaceable materials. References are made to this throughout the installation such as the slipping film falling from its surround projected here in its 'damaged beauty' and in the slide mount's Meta data [meta – morph – osis]

13. 'So the Dead do Live on...'. Large format film strips. Marshall, K. 2014..



FIG [12]



FIG [13]

12. For Jacques Lacan, 'the order of the real is not only opposed to the imaginary, but is also located beyond the symbolic. Unlike the symbolic, which is constituted in terms of oppositions such as "presence" and "absence", there is no absence in the real. The symbolic opposition between "presence" and "absence" implies the possibility that something may be missing from the symbolic, the real is "always in its place: it carries it glued to its heel, ignorant of what might exile it from there.' (Lacan, 1988) If the symbolic is a set of differentiated signifiers, the real is in itself undifferentiated: "it is without fissure." (1988) The symbolic introduces "a cut in the real," in the process of signification: "it is the world of words that creates the world of things." (1988) Thus the real emerges as that which is outside language: "it is that which resists symbolization absolutely." (1988) The real is impossible because it is impossible to imagine, impossible to integrate into the symbolic order. This character of impossibility and resistance to symbolization lends the real its traumatic quality.

FIG [14]



Théâtre d'ombres (modèle spécial), 1986, installation with six Neapolitan ex-votos

Here, a film montage would still, in the end, create a predetermined linear sequence. Instead a montage or collage approach is taken in order to allow for interpretation and projection by the audience as Julie Reiss (1999) observes in her analysis of installation art, 'the spectator is in some way regarded as integral to the completion of the work'. Whilst Selby (2009) comments in 'Animation in Process', 'our ability to observe, decipher and understand content is shaped by a number of contextual parameters and importantly, our own experience'.



FIG [15]



FIG [16]

I must turn my attention to the subject of archive due largely to their fundamental impact on the experience as a whole. My discovery of the Butterfly Book has been utterly compelling. This singular discovery has completely altered the way I practice and has become the genesis from which all responses originate. My work is now drawn from a central core, able, as it is, to play with and explore recurring tropes. I cannot, of course, forget the experience offered to me at the Visual Resources Centre and the generosity of its curator with whom I have spent many hours discussing aspects of the resource, its historic significance, photographic content and categorising method and idiosyncrasies. It is beautifully full of eccentric detail and tantalising flaws. Within it I have made fascinating discoveries, found charming wit and oddities of many varieties. I have met an amazingly diverse set of people who pass through it, seeking inspiration and knowledge just as I do and many, more who have chosen to support the campaign to prevent its loss.¹⁴ The response has been extraordinary. Discoveries here, just as in the Options unit have been fundamental to the development of the work and my understanding of it.



FIG [17]

14. Working to prevent its closure and disposal has provided an immeasurable experience. I have written articles, given talks to students, researchers and academics, presented at conferences, created a network of supporters that range from concerned students and academics to Visual Resources professionals, World class Museum Directors and Heads of Research, Research Professors and many others. People from across the world; Australia, USA, Italy, South America, New Zealand, Germany, Russia, Southern Ireland and the UK, all speaking on the same passion, to prevent the loss of an endangered cultural art form, our history.

ILLUMINATING
ARCHIVES:
TRACING
VISIBILITY, LIGHT
AND MEMORY

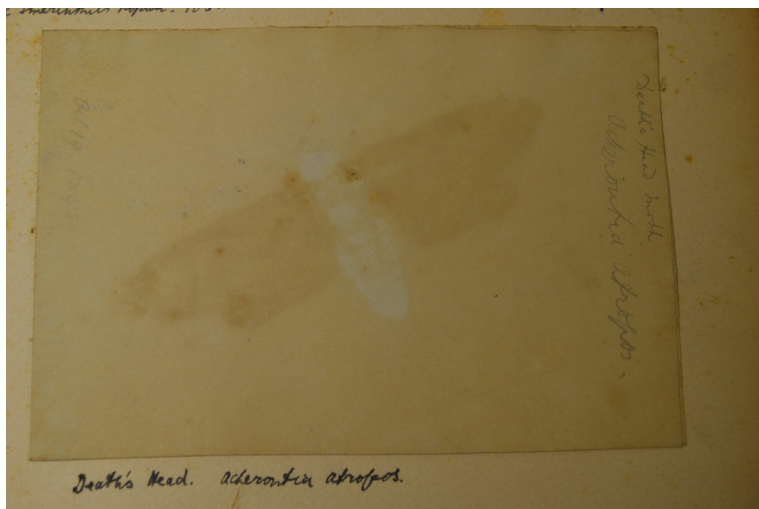


FIG [18]



FIG [19]

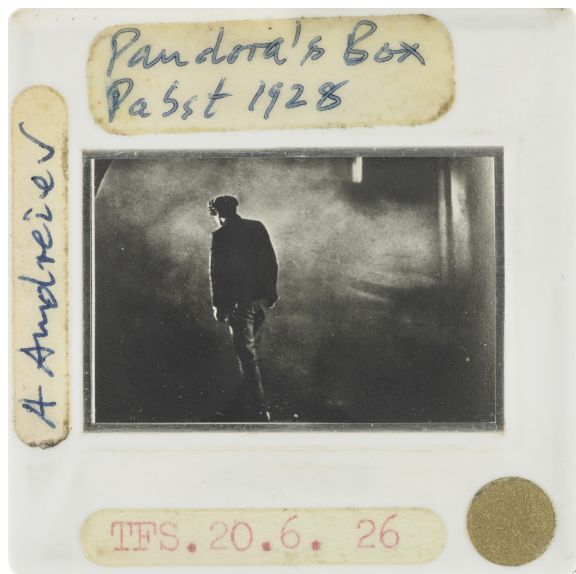


FIG [20]

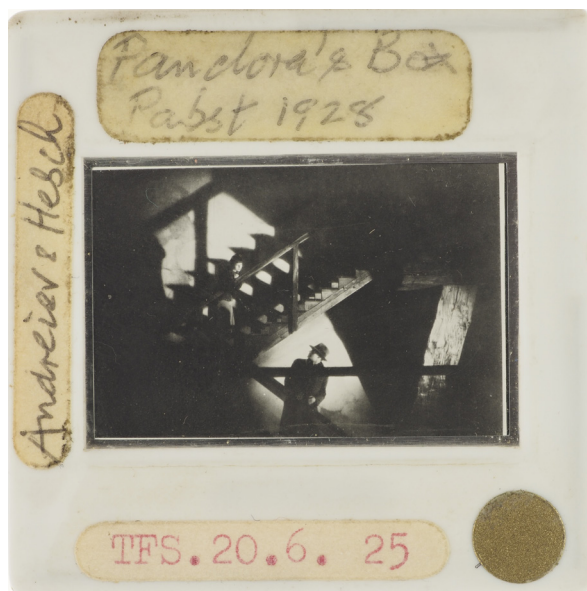


FIG [21]



FIG [22]



FIG [23]

GREEK ΧΑΟΣ KHAOS MEANS
“EMPTINESS, VAST VOID, CHASM,
ABYSS”, FROM THE VERB ΧΑΙΝΩ,
“GAPE, BE WIDE OPEN, ETC.”, FROM
PROTO-INDO-EUROPEAN *ǵʰeh₂n,
COGNATE TO OLD ENGLISH ĠEANIAN,
“TO GAPE”, WHENCE ENGLISH YAWN.
IT MAY ALSO MEAN SPACE, THE
EXPANSE OF AIR, AND THE NETHER
ABYSS, INFINITE DARKNESS. PRIMAL
CHAOS WAS SOMETIMES SAID TO BE
THE TRUE FOUNDATION OF REALITY,
PARTICULARLY BY PHILOSOPHERS
SUCH AS HERACLITUS

=====

=====

EPIPHANIES



The journey of the last two years is embedded within the installation. Just as the 'AtoM' film tried to map out progress through an allegory, fictionalising the experiences, so the installation follows. Layers of time are revealed through projection, traveling across a beam of light, falling on to mirrors where a build up of dust signifies elapsed time and the presence of decay. Images soften and distort then reflect back on themselves becoming inevitably altered, eluding to parallels on the differences between analogue and digital archives; one is not the other they are different. The mirrors are synonymous to 'portals', giving new ways to view the work whilst capturing the distance of time.¹⁵ Images overlap and intertwine offering no immediate perceptible narrative, no single thread, instead multiple lines of enquiry are offered expecting the viewer to draw conclusion for them-selves, just as they might when responding to materials in the archive. Images are bounced to the other side of the space, focussed in some and less so in others, angles of imagery too create uncertainty and are disconcerting, a fitting metaphor for the journey. A cacophony of visual stimulus is bounced around the space, whilst the viewer is placed in the centre, their shadow cast, placing them inside of narrative as an integral part of the story and within a continuous self-referential act of being ever present in animation, the state of being alive. I am here, I am in this, but so are you. You are here. I am here. 'We' become archive.¹⁶ An awareness of the physical, of the space and of the object is further presented through the construction of the installation space.

'Many artists and critics have argued that this need to move around and through the work in order to experience it activates the viewer, in contrast to art that simply requires optical contemplation [...] The idea of the 'decentred subject' runs concurrently with this... In 'Perspective as Symbolic Form' (1924) the Art Historian Erwin Panofsky argued that Renaissance placed the viewer at the centre of the hypothetical 'world' depicted in the painting [...] [Poststructuralist] theories seek to provide an alternative to 'the idea of the viewer as a rational, centred, coherent humanist subject' instead suggesting that 'each person is intrinsically dislocated and divided. [...] Installation art's multiple perspectives are seen to subvert the Renaissance perspective model because they deny the viewer one ideal place from which to survey the work.'

(Bishop, 2005) 5

15. It must be mentioned that, I have grown to regard slides as portals in to other worlds, delicate holders of moments, glimpses in to the past, gateways. One [mirror] is angled to pick up the floor reflecting the mirror and projections opposite. It is confusing, chaotic, disconcerting, but exciting.

16. 'The archive is us in so many ways.' (Marshall, 2015)

A preoccupation with the mechanics, of the beautiful machines creates an awareness of itself, a self-referential comment on the art form of animation. This 'self referential' is further accentuated by the emphasis of the machines' 'voices', the clicks and clunks the evocative 'ticka-ticka-ticka' of 16mm film running through a projector. Mulvey's fetishist appears here too, perhaps? It speaks to the viewer telling them it is aware of what it is. It is material. It exists fundamentally in the real world and yet not. It is artifice, pretence, a 'magic box of illusion'.

[Animation] is the choice of the avant-garde, a modernist language, and the height of experimental cinematic achievement. [...] It is at one and the same time an invisible art or the art of the visible. It is a form destined to be defined ultimately not by formal conditions – frame-by-frame manipulation of materials in the creation of phases of representational motion – but by the artist, context and condition of expression. Arguably nothing has changed. Animation has always reimagined itself... [the difference is] this is now acknowledged and that artists and animators wish to reengage with established parameters and definitions to re-establish or de-establish the term and the discipline of animation in alternative ways. (Wells, 2008)

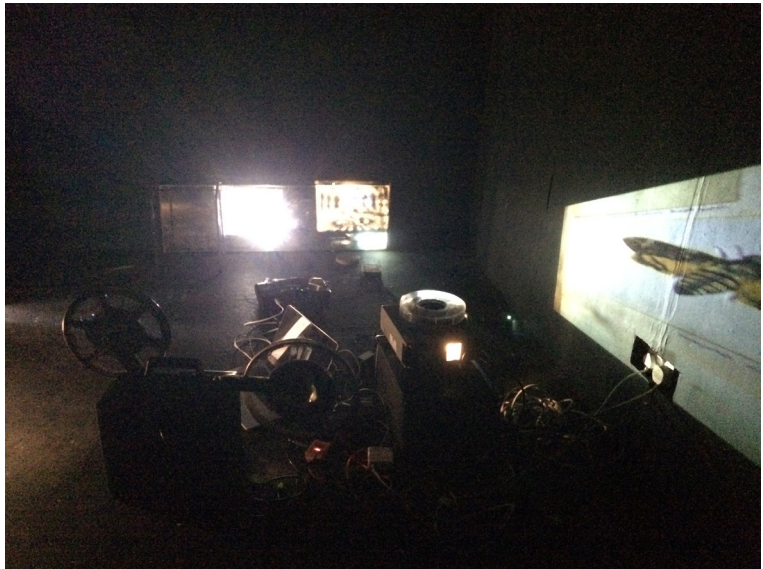


FIG [24]

That the journey is cyclical is no surprise and I again return to the backward mapping exercise that I so appropriately lost at the beginning of this experience that held at its centre the word 'transformation'. I remember little of the stages that I created to reach what was at the time a bewildering conclusion. It was in fact perhaps an advantage that the document was lost.¹⁷ I wonder whether like the 'AtoM' script it would reveal a perfect map retracing the path I have followed in the last two years. I will never know unless it is unearthed in a dusty box sometime in the future - an occurrence that would not feel out of sorts in this tale.

T r a n s f o r m a t i o n [m e t a m o r p h o s i s] r e m a i n s a t t h e c e n t r e .

'We [human beings] metamorphose not just metaphorically, but in the truest, broadest sense of the word. Yet I think there will always be that part of us that fights against it. ...There's no butterfly that looks back with remorse to the caterpillar it used to be. But we do. We remember. We can't help but look back and remember the creature we used to be. And regret what we might have lost. And this for us is the great irony at the heart of metamorphosis. That the same part of us in which metamorphosis is realized; our mind, is the same part of us that fears it most.'

(BBC, 2013)

The consideration of fear and uncertainty has followed along and a meditation has developed, one of acceptance. The acceptance that it will be my constant companion fuelling further endeavor and never again calling a halt to actions as perhaps in a previous incarnation of myself. I am, for all intensive purposes, changed, different to the person who enrolled on the course. It has been mentioned to me that many seek this from the MA, I know I certainly did. I was not prepared for how fundamental this would be.

[illegible]

17. It has been recognized that a fundamental trope within all responses is that of 'loss' not least when, after my talk to level 4 Unit X students, I was approached by one of my audience who seemed keen that, if I had not realized already, this was in fact the case; that my work is about loss in its many forms. At the end of the first year of the MA a hard drive containing the only copy of much of the work failed. The work was eventually and at great expense retrieved by a data retrieval company, but for the following four months I had to come to terms with the loss of the MA to date. This had a fundamental effect on me and I believe formed the beginning of a 'letting go', an acceptance of failure and ultimately a reckoning of 'loss'. Much of the subsequent work involved in some way a consideration of this condition; the acceptance of loss running as it was concurrently with astonishingly personal and emotive responses to the materials I was working with. On the same occasion another one of the audience, an Illustration with Animation student, approached at the end to produce from her purse a small and beautifully folded triangular package. This package was gifted to me as something that she thought I may like. Inside the delicate tracing paper package (you could make it out through the transparency) was revealed a blue butterfly. 'I find them all the time', she said. 'I would like you to have it'. I was quite bowled over. The content of my talk had not been revealed to the students before hand, she had not been pre-warned she genuinely collected and carried these objects about her person. It was quiet and touching.

“FOR ME THERE IS NO ONE GOOD
KEY, THERE IS A LOT OF KEYS AND
PERHAPS THERE IS NO KEY THAT
OPENS THE LOCK, BUT, IN ANY
CASE, TO BE HUMAN IS TO LOOK
FOR A KEY... THE DIFFERENCE
BETWEEN AN ARTIST AND A PRIEST
IS THE PRIEST BELIEVES HE HAS
AN ANSWER AND WE DO NOT
BELIEVE THERE ARE A LOT OF
ANSWERS, THE QUESTION IS TO
ARRIVE AT ANOTHER QUESTION.
THERE’S ALWAYS A NEW QUESTION.”

(B O L T A N S K I , 2 0 1 1)

The work is about all of it. About the many stories surrounding these experiments. The work is merely a holder and one response or a collection of responses. The work is ongoing and does not offer answers or definitive conclusions, instead it continues to ask questions and will continue to do so.

It has been noted to me that ‘art should be useless’ (Buchler, 2015) and that I must ‘leave the work behind’. For it to be art it must be able to exist without me. I have been wrestling against the compulsion to explain, so that others might ‘understand’, for sometime now. I realize that it is time to give in to this and to finally hand over control to allow others to interpret and project themselves within the work. It is only then that the work might be truly tested. It is only when others see themselves there that I will have made something that exists. Literal ideas in the early part of this study of letting go ‘control’ now reside here in this more nuanced form; a question of interpretation and projection of self.

Art is nothingness

Art is useless

I have come to the end of an experience and now see that I seek to make work, in the hope that those who see it or, I hope 'experience' it, will in some small way be affected by it. Most importantly, I hope that they will find reason to put themselves into it. I have, through continuous consideration also realised that the stories, experiences and epiphanies I have described in previous carnations of my writing cannot be expressed in a literal way or 'told' within the work. Instead they inspire these responses. My desire to recount story and contextualise the work with these 'experiences' and stories works outside of the work supporting it quietly in the background, and yet can be located at its centre. I have battled with this issue continuously, how much to 'tell'? I find much similarity in the approaches and philosophies of Tacita Dean who seeks to capture the essence of the context that lies beneath the surface of her films. She explains and recounts story during a Tate talk found online sharing that these things exist within all her work, but may not be immediately visible.

When I made my work 'Film' for Tate Modern's Turbine Hall [everything was made inside the camera] I couldn't see what I was doing, so when I saw the results it was full of both miracle and disappointment. Some things far exceeded what I could have done deliberately and that's the point. [...] It is what I love the most in film and in cinema. The in between things, the things we don't imagine that just happen. What constitutes its poetic texture, the spontaneity, the mistakes, the silence and the blindness. This is where the emotion is born.

(Dean, 2014)

The work is based on, inspired by, responsive to all of the 'butterfly book' material and yet I ask the viewer to interpret this collection of artefacts offered within the installation. In similar repose it charts the action of responding to materials in the archive, a parallel practice, if you will. The viewer is placed at the centre, their physical presence incorporated into the archive presented, as their shadow is cast within it. Shadows projected into the photographic imagery drawn from the Visual Resources Centre slides as living pictograms, photographic ghosts. The work is an experiment. I do not yet know whether it works. It is a stage, a point of consideration, a punctuation, but nothing more.

The work is transformative, it is supposed to change and will, as if taking place inside of its own chrysalis. I do not suggest that it will ever emerge as a beautiful creature. I'm not even sure that this would be my intended outcome. Instead, I am more interested in the possible permutations, the pregnant pause of creative possibilities. This work could be anything, may well become anything. It has in the last two years, at times anyway, become everything.

I have developed an astute practice. One of experimentation, questioning and exploration. It is, as always, responsive to the possibilities.

“IT SEEMS TO ME THAT MUCH OF OUR CHANGE IS SELF-DRIVEN. AND WE SEEK OUT CHANGE ACTIVELY. WE DON’T REALLY SUFFER IT - IT DOESN’T JUST HAPPEN. IT ISN’T ENACTED ORGANICALLY THROUGH OUR BODIES. WE ARE, THE ONE CREATURE THAT CAN REDEFINE THE NATURE OF LIFE; WE’RE NOT CONSTRAINED BY A BIOLOGICAL PRESCRIPTION. WE’RE NOT LIKE CATERPILLARS THAT ARE, AS IT WERE, COMMITTED, CONDEMNED, FATED TO BECOME BUTTERFLIES. WE COULD BECOME ANYTHING.

(‘METAMORPHOSIS, THE SCIENCE OF CHANGE’, BBC FOUR, 2013)

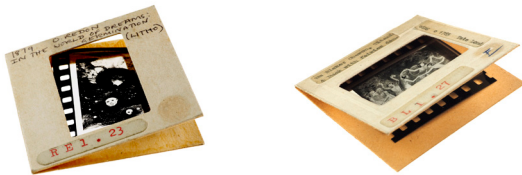
APPENDICES

|||||

ADOPT A SLIDE KRISTIN MARSHALL RE1.23 & BL1.27

|||||

|||||



These delicate frames hewn from cardboard and flaking glue, dried in the warm air, nestled in these metal cabinets. Unstuck, disintegrating and yet poignantly beautiful holding in them— serves much more than just frame, number and title, but a memory of a practice now passed in this digital age. Fragments of film and image in celluloid, a plethora of subjects and then, glimpses of sprocket edges through gaping aperture. Held to the light they become gleaming jewels singing with an irreplaceable vitality held only by film. These little things, material, fragile, densely packed with meaning and alive with possibilities, beg to be explored and interpreted, offering serendipitous avenues in which to encounter new ideas, new meanings.

This is a place, not a search engine. As such, it is imbued with personality, history, Memory. If you stay awhile, and I encourage that you do, something will bubble to the surface. This is home to a countless wealth of connections and story, your own, those shared by another, or those discovered as you sift through the multitude.

It is interesting to me, reading the contributions both to this participatory artwork and the Project[ed] Voices project that came before, that each is achingly personal as if those who respond to this space feel compelled to share deep and individual experiences. It seems that we, as human beings, find it difficult to not invest a little of ourselves in this space. Is it the materials that inspire this? The physical act of touch connects us to these materials in a way that digital archives never can. Each little jewel offers a window into another world, a portal into memory, a fragment of time. In these fragments perhaps we all, for a moment, see a reflection of ourselves, of our individual existence and in this are fleetingly touched by the fact that we will not remain, that we will disappear as our predecessors before us.

Barthes termed it ‘that terrible thing that is there in every photograph: the return of the dead’, but this place is quite the contrary. It celebrates what it is to be alive. William Blake claimed throughout his life that he was witness to visions, epiphanies, if you will, something that Joyce referred to as ‘the most delicate and evanescent moments’. I am drawn to these ‘moments’ offered by the archive, by the countless serendipitous chances waiting to be discovered by the eager and by the allure that each cabinet offers a wealth of possibilities, starting points and potential epiphanies for those open to receiving them.

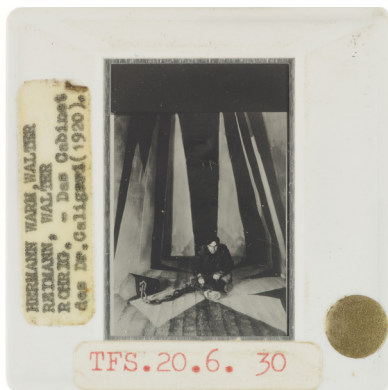
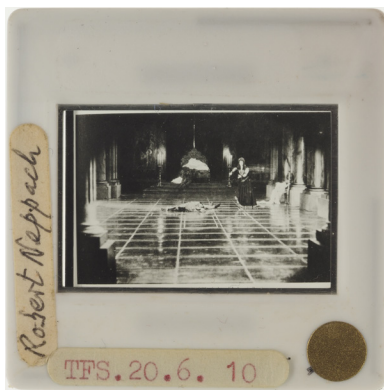
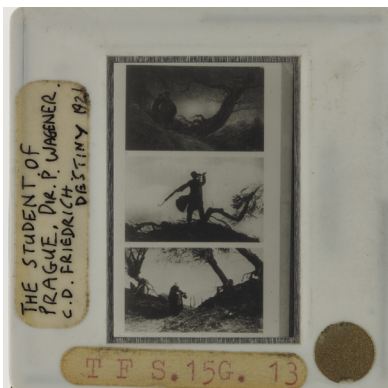
These little, delicate and fragile slides continuously fascinate me. They hold a damaged beauty and with it a parallel to the fragility of our own lives, always as ever, shown through the layers of history held in the archive. This is film and like our memories it too starts to fade. The archive is us in so many ways, we must allow it the dignity it deserves, let it sing a little longer. Preserve it in its entirety, so that others may experience the delight of the unexpected encounter, the very heart of these collections.

Kristin Marshall
MA Animation
Project[ed] Voices Curator

IMAGES



FIG [25



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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

FIG [1] Requiem. Pinhole photograph. K. Marshall 2015

FIG [2] Negative Store. Pinhole Photograph. . K. Marshall 2015

FIG [3] Vanishing. Pinhole Photograph. . K. Marshall 2015

FIG [4] Butterfly Pin with Sketchbook cut ups

FIG [5] Faces. Photograph. Photograph on transparent paper with three stitched photographs. 1996.

FIG [6] Microscope Footage. Documentary image. 16mm Film. Frame Close Up

FIG [7] Microscope Footage. Documentary image. 16mm Film. Section of Film

FIG [8] Microscope Footage. Documentary image. 16mm Film. Frame .Work desk.

FIG [9] Uncanny. Pinhole Photograph. Exterior Shot over Stockport. K. Marshall. 2015.

FIG [10] Testing Time. Documentary photograph. META-MORPH-OSIS installation. K. Marshall
2015

FIG [11] so the Dead do Live on. Large Format Film Strips. K. Marshall. 2014.

FIG [12] RE1.23 O'Redon. World of Dreams: Germination .Litho. 35mm Slide. & Mount.
Contribution to Adopt a Slide. Online participatory Artwork. Collaborative.

FIG [13] BL1.27 Wm. Blake. Oberon, Titania & Puck with Fairies.. 35mm Slide. & Mount.
Contribution to Adopt a Slide. Online participatory Artwork. Collaborative.

FIG [14] Theatre d'Ombreo. Installation with six Neopolitan ox-volus. Christian Boltanski. 1986.

FIG [15] Photograph. Box Projection Series. K. Marshall. 2014.

FIG [16] Testing Time. Documentary photograph. META-MORPH-OSIS installation. K. Marshall
2015

FIG [17] Mrs John H. Risley Memorial Card. The Butterfly Book. ANON 148. 1856 - 1857.
Author's photograph Photograph. Box Projection Series. K. Marshall. 2014.

FIG [18] Death's Head Hawk Mot. Ghosts in Gum. Photograph. Box Projection Series. K. Marshall. 2014.

FIG [19] The Butterfly Book. ANON 148. 1856 - 1857. Author's photograph. 2014.

FIG [20] TFS. 20.6. 26 Pandora's Box. Archival Material featured in META-MORPH-OSIS installation

FIG [21] TFS. 20.6. 25 Pandora's Box. Pabst 1928. Archival Material featured in META-MORPH-OSIS installation

FIG [22] Photograph. Box Projection Series. K. Marshall. 2014.

FIG [23] Photograph. Box Projection Series. K. Marshall. 2014.

FIG [24] META-MORPH-OSIS installation. Machines. K. Marshall. 2015

FIG [25] Selection of Handpicked Slides . Archive materials featured in META-MORPH-OSIS installation

FIG [26] Psyche. Digital Film. Pinpoint Hole. K.Marshall. 2015.

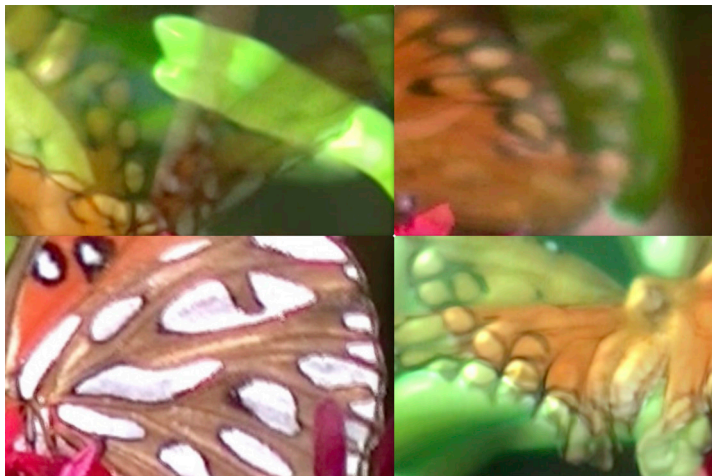


FIG [26]

